

'Utter rubbish' exposed

Reading 'Greens Must Not Be Spared', I was convinced the piece was an 'April Fool wind-up'. I sought confirmation from the editor, who assured me that the opinions expressed, questionable though they may be, were indeed genuine.

Well – where does one start to expose, discredit and denounce so much utter, irresponsible rubbish and completely unfounded statements? Mr Travers obviously has faith in his convictions and I also have convictions – I am convinced that the article was a gross insult to our profession and I will not therefore attempt to counter the idiotic statements and contradictions contained therein.

I must highlight one, however, which screams 'impossible': How can a course accommodate 2,000 rounds of golf in 14 days in the middle of winter, having regard for the hours of daylight available? That works out at 142 rounds daily, discounting the possibility that the course may not have been open for every one of those 14 days and bearing in mind also that over 26 days of the year his (Lamberhurst) course was closed.

Could it possibly be that Mr Travers – in his capacity as a PGA professional – has a vested interest in green fees? Not to mention the sale of golfing requisites – with an emphasis on luminous golf balls, studded wellington boots and the hire of sledges and aqua-lungs!

The mind boggles. Can readers imagine what must transpire at Lamberhurst GC committee meetings? Answers on a postcard!

DAVID HINDMARSH

Course Manager, Milngavie GC, Glasgow

The article 'Greens Must Not Be Spared' is a prime example of the reason why golf professionals should be kept well away from the running of golf courses.

Every greenkeeper tries to keep greens in play as much as possible, but knows equally that there are limits. In different parts of the country there are harder frosts and measurably different rainfall levels etc., which make comparisons difficult. Sure, we know that plenty of 'assist' machines exist, but can all clubs afford these for the work needed to aid recovery after adverse conditions?

It is stated, quote: 'Mike doesn't believe in temporary greens and unless conditions on the course are unpleasant and muddy the course remains open – whether the rain has bucketed down or greens are covered in frost'. That statement appears contradictory.

To my mind, professional golfers (or those responsible for arranging their tournaments) have not helped greenkeeping one little bit, eliminating many of the natural grasses by insisting that the ball 'holds' even when struck with woods and long irons.

Many are now discovering that American ideas just do not work in Britain and it is unfortunate that many such ideas have also been applied to some of our treasured seaside links, with glaringly detrimental effect.

For me, it is members golf that is most important, and my members understand that if conditions are not right they go over to play on temps for their own good. I am amazed that Mr Travers has time for three jobs, I certainly would not have time to be a golf pro.

JOHN NUDDS

Course Manager, Gerrards Cross GC, Bucks

(John Nudds is captain of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon County Golf Team and a category one player – editor).

Was the nonsense which appeared in 'Greens Must Not Be Spared' put in as bait trailed before readers to induce comment? If it was printed merely to warn members what will happen to their courses (and them) when the PGA takes over (witness what has already happened in cricket and tennis), I could excuse it, but really...!

Every line contravenes sensible greenkeeping, reveals appalling constructional errors and mistaken deductions. The winter of 1992/93 was very wet, but it was abnormally mild according to Met. Office records.

The danger is that inexperienced greenkeepers will be led astray and aggressive green chairmen will use this as a stick.

BILL BISHOP

Ross-on-Wye GC, Herefordshire

Congratulations to Mike Travers for the very brave article 'Greens Must Not Be Spared'. Whilst I cannot condone the set-up at Lamberhurst, the triple role of pro., greenkeeper and greens chairman hardly being ideal, Mike's attitude to his course and greens is to be applauded.

I too managed greens on a heavy clay base for eight years, very successfully and along similar lines to Mike. It seemed to me that in a reasonably sheltered environment, good all year-round greens could be produced from far from desirable growing mediums. Keeping the nutrient levels relatively high and the cutting heights relatively low, i.e. a whisker above an eighth during the summer and never higher than a quarter during the winter, combined with regular aeration and hole changing, gave greens that putted at between 9 & 10 on the stimpmeter all summer and greens which stood up to winter wear at speeds between 7 & 8 except under the most severe of conditions. In fact these greens were noted for miles around as quality greens, when in fact they were constructed from anything but quality materials. A word of warning however – it is absolutely essential to 'keep your finger on the pulse' as the patient can be temperamental, finicky and at times downright awkward!

I feel that Mike Travers may attract a certain amount of flak from the article. I hope this helps to redress the balance.

PAUL WORSTER

Course Manager, Minchinhampton GC, Gloucs

May I congratulate BIGGA on their excellent pesticide course, and especially Jon Allbutt for his superb tuition, which resulted in all participants gaining PA1 and PA2 exam passes with flying colours. Not only was the course first rate, but the conversation was very stimulating – and not always about pesticides or legislation either!

One talking point concerned 'Greens Must Not Be Spared'. After we had convinced ourselves that it wasn't an April Fool joke we discussed it bit by bit, to our great amusement. I know that a certain sector of our membership express fears that PGA professionals will eventually take control of their jobs, but I do not share their view. Judging by the content of Mike Travers article we have nothing to fear, especially when we keep up to the minute

via Allbutt inspired educational courses at Aldwark Manor.

One point I would like to make, however, is this: would the course be kept open in all conditions if the pro. was not making a profit from shop sales or taking a percentage from green fees?

A greenkeeper does not have this problem and the wise greenkeeper will always look after his course at all costs.

ED McCABE

Course Manager, Brokenhurst GC, Hampshire

I wonder if you can help on this? We have received a letter from Patrick Knook, a trainee greenkeeper in Holland. He is attending a school for horticulture and has spent some time working on a golf course.

To further his studies he would like to spend some time working on a British golf course, from 28 June through to 6 August.

Is it possible that one of your members could use an extra pair of hands?

KAREN SMITH

PR & Marketing Manager, Ransomes Sims & Jefferies Ltd, Ipswich. Telephone 0473 270000.

Our greenkeeper at Sandilands was having big problems with moles last year, having no luck in catching them. Though I play at Sandilands I work for another club and having some experience with these creatures I asked if I might give my method a try. He encouraged me to 'have a go'.

From the very start I had success, trapping about seven or eight, though the main problem was centred around our tenth green. Not wanting to place traps on or around the green, I enlisted the help of the catering staff and obtained some five litres of old cooking fat, pouring the whole lot down the two main runs. From that day there has been no signs of the creatures returning.

This is a tip I picked up many years ago, one which I have used hundreds of times and always with great success. I pass it on so that it may help others.

GEOFFREY KNOLES

Vice captain, Sandilands GC., (also head greenkeeper, Woodthorpe Hall GC.) Lincs

Reading April's Greenkeeper International my attention was drawn to the article 'It's Girls' Work Too'. I found this very interesting indeed – and very true to life.

I am the deputy head greenkeeper at Romiley GC, Stockport, and before this I served a sound and thorough apprenticeship at Mere G&CC under the supervision of course manager Mike Sheehan, backed up with college training at Myerscough College.

Personally, I believe that if a person demonstrates real interest, determination and enthusiasm for their job it doesn't really matter if they are male or female, they will succeed.

I can safely say that greenkeeping has proved to be a very interesting, challenging and varied career that has given me maximum job satisfaction. I am glad I took the 'risk' in choosing greenkeeping as a profession – it has certainly paid off.

DIANA K LYTHGOE

Romiley Golf Club, Stockport, Cheshire